

# Phases of Religious Thought

Continued From Preceding Page.

Buttenwieser rejects as intrusions and later additions the whole speech of Elihu (as he reconstructs it) and also the cheaply conventional "happy ending" of the ordinary version. He makes a radical rearrangement of Chapters 16-27 and thereby escapes many of the strained readings and grammatical distortions of the text that have hitherto been current.

He sees in Job the last and highest expression of early Jewish monotheism, in protest against the intrusion of the Persian dualism which prevailed both in later Hebraism and in Christianity and is still largely a controlling element in the modern orthodox churches. He shows that the Satan of the prologue is not at all the "personal devil" of later days. The word is not yet even a proper name, but an appellative, "denoting the province of this agent of God." It is God Himself who afflicts Job. The prelude is a "mere dramatic expedient employed to bring out the purpose and central idea of the drama." And that drama is man's questioning of the inscrutable ways of God with him, a critical questioning, involving reliance upon his own intellect, and yet emerging in a strengthened faith and belief in the existence of a purpose in the universe. Prof. Buttenwieser summarizes it:

Job by his great calamity having found all his previous experience reversed, all his inherited notions belied, has come to search in the depths of his own being for some clue that might lead to the stabilization of his moral world. He has found this clue in his own moral consciousness and . . . he now emerges clear and assured.

From this new and solid base he now proceeds to find the solution of his problem, the problem of God's ways with man. He considers this from two aspects: (1) Is there any retributive justice in this world? (2) What is the governing principle of the divine world economy?

He believes in retribution of a spiritual not of a material nature. . . . His clear conscience is his priceless good, in that it gives him strength to endure his affliction, and so fills his heart with comfort and joy that he can at all times feel assured in the presence of God.

As to the second side of the question. . . . Job answers that God's ways are beyond human comprehension—the divine world economy must remain forever a mystery.

Lo, these wonders are but the outer edges of His ways. Only a whisper of Him do we catch.

Who can perceive the thunder of His omnipotence?

Job implies that if man could comprehend . . . then those things which by reason of his finite view must now seem unjust would appear infinitely just and wise.

Even from so scrappy and inadequate a selection it is plain that there is a striking similarity here to the evolutionary religion of a Burroughs; and also to Gilbert Murray's "religio grammatici," and to the summary given above from Dr. Lake's book. It ranks Job as a very modern man.

## V.

Sir Henry Jones holds, in the Gifford lectures to the University of Glasgow, reprinted as "A Faith that Enquires," that those "who can neither accept the ordinary teachings of the church nor subject themselves to its dogmatic ways," may none the less reach God by "the way of pure reason." It is an attempt to adjust Christianity as the religion of love, with a concept of moral evolution, of God as "the perfect in process." Professor Drown's book is a restatement of the "incarnation of Christ in terms of modern thought," vision of the "changed aspects of the unchanging Christ."

Prof. Bundy's minutely careful study is a refutation of the various attempts to present the historic Christ as either an epileptic, a paranoiac, or a psycho-pathic fanatic. It is a useful criticism of the controversy, from Strauss and Renan down

to the most modern German. Rev. Mr. Heffern's lectures render a useful critical service in the study of the early establishment of beliefs and the genesis of the apostles' faith. He is particularly interesting in his treatment of the Gnostic elements.

More important than detailed studies which appeal chiefly to the specialist is Prof. Wright's offering of an elementary basis for a philosophy of religion. His book is meant for college students, but is also aimed at the general reader. It is an attempt to present a selection of the necessary data, of facts and arguments for the upbuilding of any rationalized religion. The keynote of it is his assertion that "the time has passed when thinking men can either accept or reject religion uncritically. The age of faith . . . has passed away. No reasonable person now can think it wrong to doubt, or to ask for reasons why he should believe." It is an excellently made study, surprisingly comprehensive in its scope for its comparatively small bulk.

## VI.

The collection of studies on "Property," which is an enlarged, second edition of a volume that has attracted no small attention in England, is a fitting pendant to a consideration of the direction toward which a newly reorganized church may be tending. The book takes up the "evolution of property" primarily

from the side of philosophical theory and historical development, including a study of its legal aspects (by Prof. Geldart of Oxford), but its original conception is basically religious, an attempt to reconsider the idea of property in the light of the Christian ideal of stewardship. It is a denial of the validity of much of the still dominant doctrines of individualism, where they may clash with the good of the community, or of mankind as a whole. It is a temperate, scholarly consideration of the ethics and religious aspects of the modern economic fabric. Bishop Gore summarizes the apparent conclusion:

If it appears that the conditions of property holding . . . sacrifice the many to the few . . . there is no legitimate claim that property can make against the alteration of conditions by gradual and peaceful means.

It is a conclusion that will arouse animosity and it may also contain elements that are dangerously easy of misinterpretation, but it appears to be something of a corollary to the proposed revival or restatement of Christian ethics as a practical rule of life. It is especially significant since all these rationalistic movements appear to tend strongly toward social, collective regeneration rather than toward any crystallization of rearranged metaphysical or theological doctrine. They are marked by a practical desire to do something, rather than merely to take it out in speculation.

H. L. PANCBORN.

## American Books in Denmark

By GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

IT is an interesting fact that Denmark, the country which produces the greatest amount of "highbrow" literature per capita and absorbs a deal more of the same sort from France, Germany and Russia, prefers the mere yarn, the story for its own sake, from the literature of the English speaking countries. Many thousands of translations of this sort of story find a ready market in Denmark and there are also a surprisingly high number of sales in the original English. The trouble of late, of course, has been the rate of exchange, which has hindered the sale of American products anywhere in Europe. Also the fact that American publishers prefer the bound editions and do not favor the cheap paper covered volumes put out so liberally by English firms, and, because of their low price, sold everywhere, no matter what the exchange. Cheap editions of popular English novels are still sold by the thousands in Denmark, but of late the public has been favoring American stories. And where, as in the case of the translation, the price to the Danish public is the same, American stories outnumber the English.

Jack London is still prime favorite. "The Call of the Wild" under its Danish title "Ulvehunden" (The Wolf Dog) can be found on every bookseller's counter. Rex Beach is working up to a close second and leads a long procession of other writers of Western tales. Denmark has accepted Rex Beach with acclaim and acknowledges enjoying his work immensely. He is a best seller both in translation and in the original, whenever the Danish public can afford the latter. One prominent bookseller believes that a cheap paper covered edition of almost any Rex Beach story, in the original English, would sell well in Denmark. For this most highly educated public in the world is conversant with many other languages besides its own. It is American methods of book-selling, and, of course, the present disastrous rate of exchange, which keep back the sale of American favorites other than in translation.

Stewart Edward White is also a favorite in Denmark, not only with readers who enjoy his tales for the yarn's sake, but with people of literary intelligence, who recognize the dignity of his talent. James Oliver Curwood, Gene Stratton Porter, Harold Bindloss, do not come in for as much notice from literary reviewers as does Stewart Edward White. But they are best sellers in Denmark, the editions of the translations running well up into the tens of thousands. The Williamsons' books go well also. There is a ready market for each new volume.

## II.

Since Denmark and America discovered each other during the war Booth Tarkington has been a good, if not quite a best, seller in Denmark. The Danish public may not take Mr. Tarkington quite as seriously as we folks do, but they like

his books and look on them as good yarns, as well as pictures of a certain type of American life which is beginning to interest them. Then, of course, there is Harold Bell Wright. His fate in Denmark is very much as it is at home. "Highbrow" critics pay little attention to him or greet him with mild wonder as some strange phenomenon, but the general public buys his books by the thousand.

Robert W. Chambers is liked. But his publishers hold out for other prices and different arrangements than those governing Danish translations of most English and American books, so that, up to recent date, Chambers's stories are not as generally on the market as are those of the other writers mentioned.

But it is not only our stirring adventure stories that are liked. Upton Sinclair has had a big vogue in Denmark, particularly with "The Jungle." O. Henry is just being discovered, first for his Western stories, then for an occasional city tale. The Danes like short stories and recognize the high importance of good specimens of that finest form of literary art. And from a liking for O. Henry's Western tales, has come an understanding of O. Henry as a great short story writer.

Among American women writers Kate Douglas Wiggin has scored the greatest triumphs in Denmark with that hardy perennial, "Rebecca," and with several other stories. Of late years Margaret Widdemer has forged ahead rapidly in the favor of the reading public. But the popularity of these two women in Denmark is a different popularity from that which they enjoy at home. In their own country they take their readers from all classes of the public. In Denmark they are leading favorites in the literature imported for the use of a reading public of young girls in their teens. There is a great deal published exclusively for young girl readers in Denmark which, in other countries, particularly in America, is supposed to appeal to older readers as well. In Denmark older readers do not spend much time on it. However, we need not follow that thought any further except for the comforting assurance that the average young girl in Denmark is well educated and intelligent.

"Lovey Mary," by Alice Hegan Rice, has just come out in a fifth edition in the Danish translation. The exciting tales of Louis Joseph Vance are great favorites. And Grace Richmond's quiet studies of quiet people come in for a good share of favorable criticism.

## III.

But in spite of the vogue of some of the books just mentioned, it is the adventure tale that the Danes like best of all we send them. And this fact is easy to understand. Danish literature is serious enough to supply all possible home demand for Well-Schmerz, advanced sex problems, and similar subjects. There is an astonishingly high level of literary ability in Denmark and a high standard of taste. Neither writer nor reader in Denmark is

afraid of the truth, however unpleasant, in books or plays.

But there is another side of the Danish character, apart from this more serious, highly developed mentality. This particular branch of the Scandinavian race, which has elected to settle down on a tiny bit of fertile land, and so to order daily life that the average man can make a living at home, is still a race of sea rovers, still, under it all, the blood descendants of Lief Ericsson. They have become a happy, prosperous nation and have worked out a national literature which might be described as physically inert, but mentally and spiritually very much alive and groping, seeking. The physical restlessness in the blood of this race of rovers has found strangely little expression in their own writings during the last century. This possibly is why, to satisfy that need, they have turned to writers in the English tongue, to the many whose work might be described as mentally and spiritually inert, but physically alive—and we must acknowledge that until very recently the great bulk of American novels could be so classified. The Danes have the international mind in matters artistic, scientific and commercial, although politically they prefer a policy of sane nationalism. It is a happy combination, rather better than the other way around.

In spite of its limited territory Denmark is by no means to be despised as a market for books. The high level of education and material prosperity—few big fortunes but general comfort—means a sizable book market per capita and per square mile. During one year, 1919, the Danish public purchased between four and five million dollars' worth of books and borrowed four million books from libraries.

## IV.

Danish booksellers complain that American methods of book marketing interfere with the advantage they might take of the popularity of American books, which brings many calls for works of favorite authors in the original. The Danish public is perfectly willing to buy paper bound volumes, as it buys books for the contents and does not care to spend so much on the outside. Bookbinders are kept busy on books that are considered valuable enough to be preserved in libraries. And it is the present disinclination of the American publisher to put out paper bound editions which has interfered with the sale of American books in the original throughout the Scandinavian countries.

Finally, the attitude of the best Danish criticism toward our more serious books is well expressed in the following extracts from a private letter from a Danish publisher, who is also a critic of ability, to whom the present writer had sent a copy of "Main Street." He says of Sinclair Lewis:

"Lord, what a luxuriant talent he has—only it is less poetic than journalistic. I have fought his long book evening after evening, hurled it against the wall one night and started reading it again the next. I have not quite taken it all in yet, so I still hope something will happen. If it doesn't, I shall burst! Not that I am any special wanner of happenings in books. In Hamson's, for instance, not much occurs, but you read them in a flash, because their poetry takes them straight to your heart, swift winged as dreams. But what does Mr. Lewis give us?"

"Cleverly caught and correctly stenciled pictures from Main Street, U. S. A., a gallery where characteristics are piled so heavily upon each person that he becomes level and silhouetted. Where is the irony, the poetic cunning that should give us an impression of the author and make us like him? We cannot find himself for all his dry pictures."

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